Helping English Language Learners Meet the New Common Core Standards for English Language Arts

Slides 1–3

PEGGIE: Welcome everyone. This is Peggie Garcia from the National Charter School Resource Center. Welcome to the first webinar in our ELL series; our first webinar will be delivered by Diane August and it's titled *Helping English Language Learners Meet the New Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.* The National Charter School Resource Center is funded by the United States Department of Education and this will be a series of 12 webinars in 2012, so please visit our registration page often. We'll be making frequent updates throughout the year, so that you can sign up for webinars as they become available.

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We are really pleased to welcome Diane August to be our main presenter for this first webinar. The ELL team at the American Institutes for Research is led by Dr. Diane August. She began her career as an elementary and middle school teacher in California, where she taught for 10 years. She is now a managing research scientist at the American Institutes for Research and a senior research scientist affiliated with the Center for Applied Linguistics. Dr. August is an education expert with extensive background in the development of language, literacy, and science in second-language learners who has decades of experience designing instructional interventions for ELLs, and then conducting rigorous research to evaluate the impact of those interventions. Welcome, Dr. August.

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DR. AUGUST: Thank you very much. Thanks everybody for joining us this afternoon. I guess it's afternoon for most people. I'll give you a brief overview of the presentation, and I'm going to move forward at a good clip because I want to cover a lot and make sure I have time to answer questions.

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First, I'm going to briefly talk about the demographic and achievement context for English learners; then do an overview of the Common Core State Standards, highlighting the important considerations for English learners and crucial skills for English learners in meeting those standards; and then we'll get a little bit more applied. I'll give you a little vignette that really highlights the challenges and strengths that ELLs bring to the process of reading and understanding text in a second language. I'll talk [AUDIO SKIP] for getting ELLs from here to there—there meaning the ability to meet those Common Core State Standards.

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If we look at a demographic and achievement portrait of ELLs, most everyone is aware of the dramatic increases in the school enrollment of ELLs. If you look between the 1998–99 and 2008–09 school years, the general school population increased by about 7 percent, whereas the ELL enrollment grew by 51 percent, and currently ELLs make up about 10.8 percent of all public school students. What's interesting is that many of these students are native born. If you look at the elementary grades, 24 percent of ELLs are foreign born; the others are born in the United States. At the secondary level, there are more ELLs that are foreign born, but still about 44 percent. Sixty percent of the ELLs are concentrated in just a handful of states. Those states are New York, Illinois, Texas, Florida, Arizona, and California, but there have been dramatic increases in the number of ELLs in some states, particularly in the Southeast and Midwest, and New Mexico.

If you look at the NAEP performance results—and we just did a snapshot here of grade 8 ELLs—you can see that the big discrepancy is between ELLs and non-ELLs on the National Assessment of Educational Progress for reading, math, and science, and we see similar outcomes for grades 4 and 12.

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I don't know how many of you have looked at the Common Core Standards. Let me talk about these important considerations first. These are really important because they create a predicament for ELLs if you think of them in the context of the Common Core—that's

development of native-like proficiency in English takes many years, and ELLs that start schooling in the United States in later grades are going to need additional time to meet the language arts standards (and I'm focused on language arts during this presentation). That's one thing we're going to have to think about, and there are going to have to be some systemic adjustments here if we want ELLs that start school in the United States at later grades to meet these standards, in terms of giving them additional time to do so.

The other thing is that ELLs are going to meet the language standards according to their English proficiency levels, and grade-by-grade progress for these students in language arts needs to take this into consideration. There are certain standards or outcomes that are expected of children at each grade level, and for ELLs it's going to take them longer in a given year to meet those standards, so we're going to have to consider and think about what that implies for how to instruct them.

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In front of the standards are these portraits of students who are college and career ready, and I just highlighted some skills that I think are really important for ELLs and why I think they're important. One is this idea of demonstrating independence and, to do that really calls for giving kids the ability to request clarification and ask relevant questions, and to become self-directed learners, effectively seeking out and using resources to assist themselves. The standards specify resources like teachers, peers, and print and digital reference materials, but additional resources that aren't listed in the standards for ELLs would include first-language knowledge and skills, and strategies they can use to learn from context. Vocabulary is an example; ELLs, on average, know many fewer word meanings than English-proficient students, and the more words you know the better you're going to be at understanding text. The better you are at understanding text, the more words you're going to learn from context and from reading. This is the famous "Matthew effect."

In a sense, the reason why it's so important for ELLs to become self-sufficient is that they're going to have to work hard on their own, independent of teachers in a sense, to gain vocabulary, to read text;

otherwise, they're just not going to catch up. I think we focus a lot on the kinds of things that teachers can do in classrooms, and we haven't really started thinking hard enough about the ways that we can make ELLs become more self-sufficient and more self-directed. I just want to raise that as a very important point, and I'm glad that this skill made it into the standards.

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Another particularly important skill for ELLs is the ability to respond to the varying demands of text. That has to do with, for example, setting and adjusting; a purpose for reading; and writing, speaking, listening, and language use as warranted by the task. If you get into the standards themselves, if you look at the speaking and listening standards, they require students to adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks and demonstrate command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. This is important because for ELLs there are a lot of conventions of formal English that native speakers would be familiar with, but that ELLs would not necessarily be familiar with, for example, using vocabulary in grammar that's free from idiomatic slang or specialized use. I think native speakers have a much better sense of how to adjust speech to context, whereas for ELLs that's going to be a lot more challenging. Again, this is a really important skill for ELLs because this front piece is focused on skills, not standards.

There's one skill I really like, and it applies to both ELLs and native speakers, and that is students coming to understand other perspectives and cultures, being able to communicate effectively with people of varying backgrounds, and reading literature representative of a variety of cultures and world views. This is so critical because ELLs are going to acquire English proficiency through interacting with native speakers. To the extent that native speakers are encouraged to communicate with people from other backgrounds, it's going to really help ELLs. It will help them by providing access to native speakers, and again we can't underestimate just how important that is for second-language learners.

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Now we're looking at the standards, so we've moved from the skills that students should have to the standards that they should meet, and I've just pulled out some skills I think are really important in speaking and listening and in language. These are the overarching standards [AUDIO SKIP]:

- Participating effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners
- Building on others' ideas
- Expressing their own ideas clearly and persuasively

This is really important because second-language acquisition occurs through meaningful interactions with native speakers. Of course, an issue we have—besides the fact that even when the kids are integrated they don't tend to mix in schools—is that there's a tremendous amount of school segregation by race, ethnicity, and income, which creates situations where ELLs don't have much access in their school environment to native speakers of a second language.

Standard three, which you see in grades 1 through 3—I really wish they had put it in grades K through 12— is this standard about asking and answering questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify if something is not understood. Again, this gets back to the point I was making earlier that we've really got to figure out how to make ELLs more independent learners. I'm going to talk a little bit about this later when I talk about teaching students learning strategies, for example. They're going to have to advocate for themselves and learn to ask questions if they don't understand something, or find ways to get information and clarification if they don't understand what they're reading or what they're listening to.

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If you look at the language standards—the standards I've pulled out here really all deal with vocabulary—I'm going to show you in a minute why this is so important, although I'm sure most of you know and you can read quickly through these. They have to do with—the first one really—using methods to learn the meanings of unknown words. Standard five is demonstrating understanding of word relationships

and nuances in word meanings, which gets at not breadth of knowledge, but depth of word knowledge. Standard six is just acquiring and using accurately a range of general and domain-specific words and phrases that are sufficient to meet the standards, and this idea of demonstrating independence and gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering unknown terms in what they hear or read.

Slides 13 and 14

I'm going to, now that the overview is done, get into helping ELLs meet these new Common Core State Standards. I just want to read to you—I was working with a third-grader quite a while ago, and this is an excerpt I gave her to read—so I'm going to do a little read-aloud for you. Listen up, so you see what happens when I start asking her about what this passage means.

> *Certain land turtles, especially those that live in deserts, are called tortoises. In Africa, there is a small soft-shelled tortoise that lives among rocks. It has a thin, flexible shell. To escape danger it can squeeze into a rock crevice. This tortoise takes in air and swells up like a balloon, so that it becomes fastened safely in the crevice.*

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The child I was working with read this passage with 92 percent accuracy, and she was quite fluent, but as I queried her it became obvious she didn't know the meaning of words like "flexible," "crevice," or "fastened." I also have to point out that this text was lexiled at about a second/third-grade level—and this child was a third-grader—and it was the old lexile levels, by the way. I asked her, "Can you tell me anything about what you just read?" She replies, "In Africa, there's a small shell that turtles go into, and it pops up like a balloon."

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The conversation continues here:

"Can you tell me more about that shell?"
"It looks like a rock."
"Did anything surprise you about what you read?"
"The tortoise sometimes pops up like a balloon."

“Where do turtles live?”
“ In the desert.”
“ What does a turtle do to escape danger?”
“It pops up like a balloon to escape danger.”

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“How does the puffing up help it escape danger?”
“It gets like air and makes the tortoise get bigger and bigger like a balloon.”
“And how does that help it escape danger?”
“It flies up like a balloon.”
“Why do you think turtles have thin, flexible shells?”
“I don’t know.”
“Do you know what flexible means?”
“No.”

The issue here really is that if you read the passage, the “soft-shelled tortoise” indicates that the turtle has a soft shell, not that the turtle goes into a shell, which is how this was interpreted. I think Kenny didn’t really understand “soft-shelled” as defining tortoise and she didn’t know the word “flexible” because she reported that the shell was “hard as a rock.” You can see that she’s—what’s interesting again, the strengths that these kids bring to bear—bringing her background knowledge to this, right? That’s how most shells are, and the story indicates it:

As the shell expands, the turtle becomes fastened and secure. But if you don’t understand the word “crevice” and think that the turtle is in the shell, it would make sense that one way to escape would be to rise up into the air. You can see that Kenny’s drawing on her background knowledge about shells and about balloons, and she’s making an inference that one way to escape would be rising into the air as if you were in a balloon. But she totally misunderstands what’s happening here.

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This is the last part of it:

“Do you know what a crevice is?”

“No.”
“And it says to escape danger, it can escape into a crevice; does this picture help you out?”
“Hiding under a rock.”

She’s looking at the picture, which shows what’s happening, but her interpretation was completely different. This is why vocabulary is [AUDIO SKIP] soft-shelled [INAUDIBLE], and what it refers to. Let’s just keep this in mind when I talk about how we might prepare ELLs for reading complicated grade-level text.

Slide 19

In case you haven’t seen them—and I may not spend a lot of time going through these publishers’ guidelines here—you should definitely go online and find them because these are guidelines that the people who wrote the standards have given to publishers. They assume they’ll be used in creating curriculum to help all students meet these standards. They’ve got standards for children in grades K through 2 and standards for children in grades 3 through 12. It’s very easy to find these if you go online. It talks about text selection and the desire that students read increasingly complex text with increasing independence; there’s a greater focus on informational text in elementary school and literary nonfiction in English language arts classes in grades 6 through 12. This is a real summary.

These publishers’ guidelines go into a lot more elaboration. In terms of questions and tasks, high-quality text-dependent questions and tasks, students read closely and gain knowledge from text. It’s the idea that you don’t bring in a lot of background knowledge here; that kids should figure out what’s happening in the text from the text itself. It’s this idea of cultivating students’ ability to read complex text independently—you want them to be independent readers—that all materials focus on academic vocabulary and complex text.

I just want to say something here before I go on to the next slide, which goes into writing. For me, it’s going to be a real issue for ELLs to read text where the complexity level has been really ramped up, and I’ll show you that in a minute. They’re going to need support to read these complex texts, which includes vocabulary and background knowledge.

They are not going to be able to extract meaning from grade-level text without initial support in these areas. I think it's something you can do, but it's got to be done carefully so you don't give away the text, and I'm going to try to show you a little bit of this later on. It is a dilemma; also, I think I have notes about this later too. It's going to require a lot more time to teach a chunk of text than you ordinarily would need teaching a student, and you're going to have to prep them for this, for reading complex text, and what's going to happen then is it's really going to detract from breadth of reading at a level where they can access the meaning of the text.

I get into a real dilemma here about the importance of giving kids—I agree it's really important to give kids access to grade-appropriate text—but if you look at my introduction, it's going to also be really important to get kids reading widely because that's another way they can gain. If they're reading text at the right level, it's through that reading that they're going to gain additional vocabulary and comprehension skills and that, in turn, will help them further. This is a dilemma; maybe we'll have time to talk about it later.

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Publishers' guidelines about writing to sources and research … Writing to sources is a key task, so they want students to analyze and synthesize sources and present careful analysis, well-defended claims, and other information through writing, and then extensive practice with short, focused research projects. They have these additional criteria that include:

- Reading complex text with fluency, which is one of the foundational skills
- Increasing focus on argument and informative writing
- Engaging in academic discussions
- Using multimedia and technology thoughtfully
- Covering the most significant grammar and language conventions

I have to say I could make this available to you, but we've created a table that lists … We started with discourse structures because if you're going to write there are different structures you write to. You can write summaries, as an example, so we went through the standards

and created these overarching categories by type of writing and, under that, subsumed the standards across the grades, so that when teachers want to think about what are the genres I have to teach, it would be clearly there in front of them.

The other thing we're doing—there is going to be a lot of conversation about this—is covering the most significant grammar and language conventions, and how you do this in a way that's helpful to ELLs. One of the things that we're doing right now in our work is using functional analysis to help kids understand complex sentences. You're not really naming nouns as much as you're naming actors. You're not as much naming verbs as you are naming actions, and in a way to help kids really understand really complex sentences. But it's going to be interesting to see how the grammar and language standards play out with ELLs.

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Now I'm going to try to really get into what … If you're going to start doing this now, what do you do? Where do you start? I'm working with teachers in three different states. I'm working in New York state with the New York State Regents; I'm working with teachers in four Midwestern states. I'm working with directors of ELL services for cities in these Midwestern states and I'm working with first-, fourth-, and eighth-grade AFT [American Federation of Teachers] teachers in Albuquerque. I've been doing this for a while now, and we're coming up with a method to how to approach these standards. I've divided it into this nice little outline in terms of preparation for reading, during reading, after reading.

In preparation for reading, you've got to start with grade-appropriate text, and I'm going to show you the grade-to-lexile correspondence standards, the new standards right now. I think you've really got to preteach key vocabulary and word- learning strategies and develop students' background knowledge before they get into the reading.

During the reading, we're using shared interactive reading that's ESL enhanced. There are a couple of things I learned from a workshop that I really liked—that are these lower-the-level questions—and I'm going to talk to you a bit about that and using evidence-based questioning,

which is very important to the folks who wrote the standards, then the importance after reading of reviewing and reinforcement and aligning with the standards throughout.

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I should also tell you that I am in the process of developing—I'm using the *Gettysburg Address* here and this PowerPoint is an example, and I've done this particular work for New York State—but I'm in the process of creating teacher and student materials to align with this, so hopefully they'll give me permission to share those. These are the new Stretch Text Measures. These are the lexile levels kids at these grades are supposed to be reading at now. This is a lot higher than it was before; it's almost shockingly higher. The *Gettysburg Address* is lexiled at 1480, which is off this chart, but with the proper scaffolding I think middle and high school ELLs can understand this.

Back to the issue I raised before, you have to spend a lot of time preteaching, and that's not necessarily a bad thing if you're careful about what you're doing in that preteaching because kids are still learning a lot there. The need for kids to do a lot of independent reading at a level where they can learn on their own is going to also be important.

The other issue we get into here is: How do you create differentiated instruction for ELLs when you have a whole class, at least, being exposed to grade-appropriate text? As is the case in the eighth-grade classrooms I'm working in in New Mexico, you've got kids that are reading at the second- , third- , fourth- , fifth- , sixth- , seventh- , and eighth-grade levels in that eighth-grade class. How do you stay on a theme and find leveled text at the appropriate level to give kids access to reading this text independently? It's going to be a real challenge. Do you do it by theme or do you do it by topic? If you look at leveled readers, generally they're leveled: there's above level, on level, and then there are one or two lower level readers at each grade level, if you're lucky, and that's just not going to be enough.

I'd really like to hear from you, all of you on the call, if you have any thoughts about this—giving kids access to those really complex texts, on the one hand, but giving them opportunities to read text levels that

are proper levels, on the other and somehow figuring out how to align or theme it—so you can think about that while I talk.

Slides 23 and 24

Here's the *Gettysburg Address* for those of you who don't remember it. The first thing is preteaching key vocabulary and, for each of these sections, I'm just doing a brief overview. First, you have to figure out which words to select, and I'm not necessarily saying that in the context of teaching the *Gettysburg Address* you should teach the 4,000 most frequent words, but since these words comprise 80 percent of text, it's a good thing to focus on if you're working with ELLs. There is a website called the first4000words.com. You guys could go onto that website and learn more about those 4,000 most frequent words, or any Google search will find you some interesting information about that, but that is 80 percent of the text. I have to tell you that this 4,000 number is a little bit simplified because some of these words have multiple meanings, so these are the 4,000 most frequent word forms. Within this group of 4,000 words, there are root words, so you've got a lot of derivations of these words, inflectional and morphological derivations of these words, which ramp it up to more than 4,000. But still, the roots—if you take the roots and teach the kids those roots-— you're in good shape, but you have to deal with multiple meanings for these words.

Then, there are these general academic words. One of the things we generally do is we use the academic word list, and there's another website you can go to where you can cut and paste your text into a textbox if the text is 2,400 words or less, and it will highlight for you the words that are high-frequency general academic. We tend to teach these because these are really important words; they appear over and over in academic text. If you're going to bother teaching anything, you might as well focus on these.

You're going to have to worry about domain-specific words also, and they have their own dilemmas because a lot of these domain-specific words, to really understand them, you need a lot of other domain-specific concepts. But these are words to focus on. Within this, how do you pick which ones? I think the words that are most important for

understanding the text better also abstract because, if you look—I've done a lot of research in this area lately and it's amazing—kids tend to acquire a lot of vocabulary if you just paraphrase it in context.

But the words that are most problematic for them—and this is work that Bill Nagy is doing also—are words that are abstract. One of the things we're doing in training teachers is giving them rubrics to use to figure out which words are abstract and which aren't. If you look at effective vocabulary instruction, it's not just giving kids… Let's put it this way, for words that are abstract, you've got to:

- Do a lot of robust instruction
- Provide definitional information, contextual information
- Build on kids' prior knowledge
- Contrast word meanings
- Make it active learning
- Require inferencing, frequent encounters

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I'll just show you a little bit of what we do here. These are two words that we selected from the *Gettysburg Address* to preteach, both were "dedicate," and what's very interesting is when you get a text at this level, it turns out a lot of words you're working with have very nuanced meanings and more than one meaning. We found ourselves working with two pictures here and talking about first the meaning of the word in the text itself, and then the meaning of the word, a different meaning of the word that's also a common meaning. We try to involve kids:

- We use Spanish, so that helps the kids in the class that are ELLs with Spanish backgrounds.
- We do work with cognates, and if we do we always tell the kids that these words are cognates.
- Visuals are really important.
- We do a lot of partner work, like turn to your partner and talk about another place or thing that is dedicated to something special. Turn to your partner and talk about another day that we dedicate to a special event.

Slides 26 and 27

We always have the kids doing something. This is “conceive”; in terms of the *Gettysburg Address*, the meaning is “to inform an idea,” but “conceive” has another frequent meaning, which is “to bring to life.” In terms of word-learning strategies, which are really important, what they are are conscious and flexible mental processes that readers use in an effort to infer the meanings of unknown words. They are tools we teach students to use as they’re reading and, when they master these word-learning strategies, they can become increasingly independent. ELLs, of course, are in particular need of these strategies.

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What about principal word-learning strategies for ELLs? One is learning and using word parts, so it turns out that more than 60 percent of words that students encounter can be broken down into parts—that would be their roots and prefixes [AUDIO SKIP]—to try to figure out the meaning. There are a lot of words that are inflected or derived, and it helps if kids can figure that out. I work closely with Michael Graves and in one of his books he has a nice list of the 20 most frequent prefixes. With regard to suffixes—the parts, the endings that come after a root—there are two kids that are quite different, inflectional and derivational suffixes. Inflectional suffixes have grammatical functions, so in “talked,” that “ed” would be an inflectional suffix; it changes the grammar of the word, where derivational suffixes mark lexical information. Examples of derivational suffixes are “ism,” “ment,” “ist,” “less,” “al,” and they tend to change words from one part of speech to another, like “socialist” and “socialism.”

One very important thing for ELLs is recognizing and using cognates for speakers whose first language shares cognates with English, so “romantic romantic” is an example; “important, importante.”

Using context… and there are lots of different kinds of context we can teach kids to use. Dictionaries, including bilingual dictionaries, and combined strategies are just some examples here.

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This slide seems obvious, but I think people just don't tend to apply it as much as they should. With ELLs, it's the importance of:

- The teacher modeling
- Working with a group
- Having kids work together
- Working independently and touching base with a peer
- Working independently

It's especially important if you can pair ELLs with more proficient kids in a classroom that can help them with the work that they're doing.

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I'm just going to give you one quick example here, which is teaching, having kids use cognate knowledge. Cognates are words that generally sound alike, look alike, and have similar meanings. Here are some examples, and what's amazing about cognates is they constitute about a third to half of the average educated person's active vocabulary.

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There's a caveat here too, which is you have to be quite literate to have this much cognate knowledge, and there are plenty of cognates that are technical in nature that kids won't have in their first language. On the other hand, there tend to be a lot of very low-frequency words in English that are very high-frequency words in Spanish, for example, so there are these "tier two" kinds of words, so cognates can be very helpful.

One thing that we might do with kids—and again these are words from the *Gettysburg Address* that I created for this webinar—is just getting kids used to the concept of cognates.

- Can you tell me the English meaning for the English words?
- Are these words cognates?
- Why or why not?

We'd only use this method if there were bilingual kids in the classroom or a dual-language class, but you would pair the English-proficient kids with … You would make sure they were with somebody bilingual in the group, in the pair, and then you give kids practice here where you give them …

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If you look at this, this is the first paragraph of the *Gettysburg Address*— there are quite a few cognates here—and you'd ask the kids to read this, underline the cognates, write the English cognate and the English meaning, and write the Spanish cognate by using bilingual dictionaries. In doing this lesson, we have already pretaught some of the words that appear in here before we set kids loose to do this activity.

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We also asked kids, and we did this, so these are the cognates that appeared in that previous section. You can see how many there are in just that one sentence, which is the first paragraph of the *Gettysburg Address*, and you can see that we've already pretaught, just in that little example I gave you, "dedicate." Again, this applies mostly in the United States to kids that come from Spanish backgrounds, but that's 80 percent of the U.S. ELLs.

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The other really important thing when you're working with this complex text is really to develop background knowledge and, when we think about how to do that, what's really important is determining exactly what background knowledge the kids are going to need to understand the text at hand. We're not really teaching social studies in this English language arts class, but if kids don't have some basic understanding of some of the concepts, through the context in which the *Gettysburg Address* was written, they're just not going to understand it in that context. It's figuring out what background knowledge they need, and then focusing on that specific piece of background knowledge. We had to create our own materials because we couldn't find targeted-enough

information. Then, you have to find or create the materials and then, just as we scaffolded the language in the main text, you've got to scaffold background knowledge. We used:

- Vocabulary glosses
- Pictures and short video clips
- Graphic organizers
- Comprehension questions

Slides 35 and 36

Here's an example of one of the pieces of background knowledge that we developed for the *Gettysburg Address*, which is: What was it? What is this thing? You can see we have a guiding question, and we always gloss here for the kids, then highlight it, and then we have questions that—for this slide they're not here—but they're interspersed throughout to really help the kids unpack the meaning.

- What was the *Gettysburg Address*?
- What does the word "address" mean in this sentence?
- How do you know that's going back to the text (remember to find out information)?
- What's another meaning for the word "address"?

You're building a little depth of knowledge; this is likely to be confusing to kids because they're going to know the word "address," but they're not going to know that "Address." They're not going to know the "Gettysburg Address" meaning of "address"; probably when they see this they're going to think *Gettysburg Address* is an address in a place called Gettysburg.

- Cemetery?
- Where was it delivered?
- Who did he deliver it to?

A lot of these are basic sorts of questions.

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These are lower-the-level questions, which I'll talk about in a minute. They're important kinds of questions to ask. When I talk about ESL-enhanced shared-reading techniques… Now we're at the next part.

We've built the kids' background knowledge; now we're at the part where we're reading the *Gettysburg Address*. These are some techniques that I think are really helpful. These are helpful for all kids, but the first thing is don't wait—don't wait until kids read a page. You've got to ask questions frequently and you've got to include lower level questions at all levels of meaning—at the word and phrase level, at the sentence level, at the passage level, and at the story level.

Examples, not for the *Gettysburg Address*, but for any passage, of lower-the-level questions would be:

- Who is *he* in this sentence? Can you put this sentence in your own words? That would be at the sentence level.
- At the paragraph level: What parts of this paragraph tell you that the girl is unhappy? It's looking for detail.
- At the passage level, it might be a question like: Is Macbeth a tragic hero or cruel butcher?

You're giving kids a choice, but the idea is these are not questions that require much inferencing or summarizing, but they really give kids access to the text. I hear teachers talk again and again about how these are a lot like higher order level questions. They're not at the top of Blooms' Taxonomy, but for ELLs, and I think for all kids, you've got to ask these questions or kids aren't going to understand the text.

The importance in the standards, and I think the importance in general, is requiring students to support their responses with evidence. There are different ways to do this. I'm going to give you some quick examples. This idea of direct citation—an example would be: Who can read me the line from the paragraph that shows that Carlos is kindhearted? It's sending a kid back to the text to cite specific text in support of an answer or a paraphrase. Carlos is kindhearted; describe why in your own words. Again, it's sending kids back to the text, but looking at the text and putting the information in the text into their own words.

This idea of give evidence, draw conclusions, an example would be: Carlos says to his mother, "I'll empty the dishwasher; you are busy." What does this say about him? Again, you're asking the kids, from evidence, from textual evidence, to draw conclusions.

This idea of giving conclusions and finding evidence, an example would be: Carlos's mother reports he is more thoughtful lately, so that's a conclusion. Then, you ask the kids to find evidence for it. The idea of one best answer, multiple answers … It's important to keep in mind that sometimes there's only one answer, or really the very best answer, but in lots of instances, there are multiple answers. You can ask kids to provide evidence for their own answer or ask them to provide evidence for somebody else's answer.

There are ESOL techniques; I showed you some for the idea of vocabulary glosses. We decided to gloss words that are archaic; we're very strategic about this. First of all, the words have to all be pretty high frequent or key, but we gloss the ones that are archaic, so those aren't the high-frequent ones. But we'll try to gloss words that are more concrete, whereas we tend to preteach the words that are more abstract, given what we've learned from our research.

We have a lot of visual materials, so we always have pictures with these short, little passages that we're using to build background, but also with the text itself. we use video clips, graphic organizers, and comprehension questions. You can't have a book of graphic organizers; they can give you ideas. The graphic organizers that are going to be most useful are going to come from the text itself.

I'm working with eighth-grade teachers on a passage that's really complex, and it turns out that to understand it, you really have to "get" the characteristics of the man and the woman that they're describing in this passage. It's called "The Hours," so we created a graphic organizer and we differentiate that. Also, it has a word bank, if necessary, where the kids have to fill in the man with the words that describe him and the woman with the words that describe her. In understanding their characters just with these words, it really gives kids an understanding, a much better understanding, of what the text is about, but to figure that out you have to think very closely about the text.

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Here is an example of a shared reading we did with the *Gettysburg Address*. It's just working with this first paragraph; we glossed "score"

and we glossed “bring forth.” We have these lower-the-level questions: How many years is four score and seven years ago? Now, remember, before the kids have gotten to this text, we’ve pretaught a lot of words and I showed you one chunk of background knowledge, but we also did work on the Declaration of Independence; we did work on the Civil War; we talked about Lincoln. Before they get to this, they know what “four score and seven years ago” is because they learned that in the passage on the Declaration of Independence, but we ask them: How many years is it? And what does Lincoln mean by “our fathers?” These central concerns are more difficult questions that really get at the heart of the text.

Slide 39

We also always give kids student charts that they can use, and we probably won’t label them lower-the-level and central concerns, but for the purpose of this PowerPoint I’ve put them in here. This is scaffolded. The kids answer, but they only need one or two words here; if we wanted to make it easier, we’d include a word bank. These central concerns … I was working from a lesson that was already provided to me, that was developed for mainstream kids, and it was developed by one of the people that created the Common Core Standards. These central concerns are questions this person thought were really important. To the extent that I’m scaffolding for the lesson that he created, I have these central concerns in here and I’m assuming that, at this point, kids would understand a lot of this.

Slide 40

Just the idea of review and reinforce content knowledge and skills … You can’t just teach a vocabulary word once, especially if it’s abstract. Kids need a lot of exposure, eight to 10 incidental exposures, and also, this is obvious, but ELLs are learning content in a second language and they may miss essential information the first time it’s presented. They’re going to need additional practice to acquire important skills in English.

Slide 41

We always give kids glossaries of the target words; where we have the word, we have the Spanish meaning; we ask them to apply the word in a sentence; they can sketch or take notes. We generally like this to be done during homework.

Slide 42

In terms of writing a summary, we asked them: Is this really a summary of the first paragraph? What we've done here is done it as a cloze with a word bank, and this could be differentiated three ways.

- For kids that are very low proficient, you give them both the cloze and the word bank.
- For kids that I think are intermediate, I might give them the cloze and then ask them to use their glossary.
- For kids that were more advanced, I'd probably give them the word bank and ask them to write a summary.

Again, the importance of thinking about how to differentiate instruction…

Slide 43

When we work with this complex text, we're always thinking about, given this particular piece of text, what kinds of activities can we develop that take place before, during, and after the text that align with the standards? You can see in this particular lesson that we developed on the *Gettysburg Address* that we are covering a number of the standards, key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas. We have this writing standard, which is drawing information from literary or informational text to support [AUDIO SKIP]

Slides 44 and 45

…language standards around the conventional standard English grammar and the function of phrases and clauses. I haven't shown you all of this because I didn't have a lot of time to do this, but I'm just saying, in teaching just this one lesson of the *Gettysburg Address*,

we've worked through these standards as well as the New York State social studies standards.

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Here are some references, and now I guess it's time for me to take questions.

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PEGGIE: Thank you so much, Diane. This is an amazing amount of information and we've had quite a few questions coming in. I think we have time for at least three or four questions. Let me start with Elizabeth [INAUDIBLE] Lopez. She asks how can performance tasks and assessments be used to assess levels of language development and comprehension; more importantly, how can teachers use student work to inform instructional and assessment decisions?

DR. AUGUST: That's really difficult to do and that's a really good question. I think the issue is you need really deep understanding of second-language acquisition and the grammar of English to be able to do that. I'll give you a little vignette here: When I did some standards work a couple of years ago for the new standards project, I had all of these prompts—these were K–3 reading standards, literacy standards that Lauren Resnick had developed—and I used the same prompts that had been used for English speakers to elicit performances across the standards because, I think this is your question, and then I got these performances and I had no idea what they meant. I had to take the videos up to Harvard and I sat there for two or three days and I [INAUDIBLE] helped me, at least.

If you're looking at kids' foundational skills, how do you know that the errors they're making are errors that are transfer errors, as an example, versus errors that are just errors that a child with learning disabilities would make, or errors that are typical of development? It's very complicated.

A little bit easier in terms of comprehension … If you looked at this passage I showed you, you've got to really think hard about why kids are making certain mistakes, and then try to figure out what it is you

need to do differently to move them along. A lot of times, it really has to do with vocabulary when it comes right down to it. If kids can read the words accurately and with fluency, it's going to come down to vocabulary and syntax, right? You're going to have to figure out how you help kids with those two aspects of the text.

I was trying to show you ways to select vocabulary and to teach vocabulary. I didn't show you the functional analysis work we did with kids because I didn't have time—where we try to help them understand the syntax—but that's what it's going to come down to, and it's complicated. If anybody else has any ideas about that, it would be really interesting if you reported on it. I know that the WIDA [World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment] consortium is working on… If you go online, maybe you could find out more about what they're doing as they move forward, but I know one of the things they want to do, they intend to do, is develop formative assessments, at least a diagnostic assessment and two formative assessments, that will be given over the course of the year to help teachers understand where individual children are with regard to their progress in acquiring English. I know they're working on language progression, which I think gets at the question that you asked me. You should follow their work. I think Gary Cook is working on this along with Allison Bailey at … Look at the work they're doing and you could e-mail Gary Cook and ask him about this question and about the learning progressions.

PEGGIE: Great. Thank you. That's really helpful. That's called the FLARE [Formative Language Assessment Records for English Language Learners] program that WIDA is working on, so there's quite a bit of information on their website that I encourage you to check out. One simple question and then one slightly more involved question: There were two resources that you referred to, Dr. August, when you were talking about high-frequency words, one was the first4000words.com, and what was the second resource?

DR. AUGUST: It was the academic word list. The website was down for a while, but it's up again. It's the academic word list, and I think it's http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~alzsh3/acvocab/wordlists.htm#awl. But I'm sure Peggie can make this available to you.

PEGGIE: Absolutely. Thank you. There were a number of people on the webinar who teach ELLs who are not Spanish speaking. You offered a number of strategies that they can use related to developing background knowledge and low-level questions. But in terms of word-learning strategies that are not using cognates, are there a couple of strategies that you might recommend for teachers with non-Spanish-speaking ELLs?

DR. AUGUST: Using word parts is one that's really helpful, as I mentioned, so teaching kids roots and working with prefixes and suffixes, to the extent kids understand the meaning of roots. Particularly, they might know a root, but if they see it in an inflected or derived form they might not know that they know it, so it's giving the kids the ability to see that root in a word that they might know, but they don't recognize. Helping them to understand that is a really good start because then they'll get the general idea of the word, but to the extent that they understand what a prefix or suffix is, it will help them further, so that's one suggestion.

Using dictionaries is really good. Teach kids to use dictionaries. There are a lot of good online dictionaries, a good bilingual dictionary. We don't tend to teach kids to use dictionaries, and I think it's underrated.

Then, just using context… I can do a promo for a book that I'm about to publish with Michael Graves. I can't remember what we're calling it, but it is a book on teaching ELLs vocabulary, and we have a whole chapter on strategies. The only strategy for kids whose language cognates with English is that cognate strategy, but all of the other ones are very important for all kids, but especially ELLs.

Slides 48 and 49

PEGGIE: Great. We've about come to the end of our time here. I'd like to thank everyone for participating in the webinar and especially thank Dr. August for a very thoughtful and insightful presentation. This is the first webinar in a longer series about ELLs, so please do visit this registration website frequently as we will be updating it on a regular basis. This webinar will be archived at the www.charterschoolcenter.org/webinars website. We should have it up

by the end of the day Friday. [AUDIO SKIP] Dr. August receives permission to post.

Thank you all again for joining. I'm going to send you to a quick survey, and it would be great if you could provide us with information about topics that might be helpful to you in the field and to let us know how we can do this better in the future. Thank you so much.